

THE YOKE REMOVED AND THE LORD REVEALED NO. 1462

**A SERMON
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"They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke."
Ezekiel 34:27.

BUT do not all men know that God is the Lord? They should know it, for He is clearly to be seen in the works of nature. Even where no revelation has come, yet heaven and earth and sea and the rain which brings with it fruitful seasons—filling men's hearts with food and gladness—all proclaim the Most High. But man by wisdom knows not God. He shuts his eyes to evidences brighter than the sun and in his willful blindness he sets up an image of wood or stone or gold or silver—bows before it and calls that his God. This is the sin of the nations that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

But do not all know God in this land—this land where there is so much gospel teaching—where we boast of our open Bible and of our Protestant pulpit? Alas, no! There are multitudes who have heard of God and who say that they believe in Him, but who have no personal acquaintance with Him and do not, in the sense of the text, know that He is the Lord. Ah, dear friends, there is no knowing God except by personal acquaintance with Him. And there is no personal acquaintance with Him except by His own revealing of Himself to our spirit. You may read as much as ever you will and hear as long as ever you please, but until your own spirit comes into contact with the Spirit of God, you do not and cannot know the Lord. You know the report of Him which you have heard with the hearing of the ear, but that is a small matter unless it leads to something higher.

There are, I fear, a great many Christian people whom we must not judge, for they keep up outwardly all that is to be expected in the Christian character according to the common run of profession nowadays who, nevertheless, do not truly know God by spiritual fellowship with Him. Their faith stands upon reason—it is based upon argument and appeals to the intellect—but it has never led to personal knowledge and acquaintance. The Lord is to them a logical abstraction, not a beloved Person. Or perhaps, which is somewhat worse, their faith as to God rests upon excitement, upon association, upon the eloquence of a favorite preacher, or something of that sort. Now, in such cases as this God is not so known as He should be and after a while, if another god is preached, a different god from the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, they leave the true God for the false. In these days of worldly wisdom, men set up a fresh deity who is more effeminate and pliable than the glorious God of Moses and of Aaron, the God of the fathers and the prophets. And straightway, those who know not the only living and true God, for there is but one, run after this new god, newly set up by these modern divines who have manufactured him in their studies as certainly as ever the Hindu manufactures mud gods by the river Ganges. They bow before this new god and cry out against the Jehovah of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as if He were to be judged by them and to be no more accounted Lord. It is amazing to hear them speak of the "stern deity of the Old Testament," and of "the semi-enlightened views of Moses and Isaiah." As for us, we heartily love Him who made known His ways unto Moses and His acts unto the children of Israel—and we desire no other God.

Those who know the Lord know that He is still the I AM THAT I AM, unchangeable in all respects. And we know that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, is the same God who revealed Himself at Paran and came with sound of thunder at Sinai. The God who manifests Himself in Jesus Christ is He who spoke to our fathers and the prophets, for He is the one glorious Lord God. Now, my brethren, there is no fear of your running after the new gods if you have once known the true God. If by experience you have been brought into fellowship with the Most High and felt His power and seen His

glory, you will be confirmed in those things which He has taught you and which His Spirit has engraved upon your soul as with an iron pen and written with the point of a diamond.

It appears from the text that there is a process by which God's own people are brought to know the Lord. This process takes place when He breaks the bands of their yoke. Then they know that the Lord is God. It is clear, therefore, that He must first of all permit His own chosen, for a wise purpose, to come into bondage. They must be in bondage or else they would not wear the yoke and there would be no opportunity for the Lord to break that yoke. I do not commend the bondage—it is a thing to be deplored—but as Augustine once cried out, "Beata culpa!" "Happy fault!" when he saw how sin had made space for the wonderful display of divine grace. So I venture to say, "Blessed bondage, which gives an opportunity for our God to come in and set His children free. And by thus breaking the bands of their yoke to teach them that He Himself is the Lord."

Let us now describe, by the help of God's Spirit, who alone can teach us, this process of breaking the bands of the yoke by which the emancipated know that the Lord is God.

There are two things to be considered. First, that *the Lord does break the bands of the yoke of His people*. And secondly, that *then they know Him to be the Lord*.

It is not difficult to show that THE LORD BREAKS THE BANDS OF THE YOKE OF HIS PEOPLE, for the yokes which they wear at different times are many and in the breaking of each one of these *they learn that He is the Lord*.

You cannot forget the first yoke of which you were conscious. It was a yoke of iron—but you had worn it for many years without feeling it. A spark of divine life dropped into your bosom and then you began to perceive that *a yoke of sin, of guilt, of condemnation under the law* was firmly fixed upon your neck. If you felt as I felt, it was indeed an iron bondage and the iron entered into your soul. We can well understand the feeling of some, who when wearing this yoke wish that God had made them frogs, or toads, or snakes, or anything sooner than that they should be men and being men should be sinful and obnoxious to divine wrath. It is a horrible thing to be a sinner—and when the horror is fully perceived it brings a little hell into the soul. What stings of scorpions, or teeth of lions, or lashes of a whip of wire can be more sharp and cutting than reflections such as these—"I have sinned and cannot undo the sin. I have provoked God and can make no atonement for my provocation. I deserve His wrath and can present no plea why that wrath should not come upon me." The fabled Atlas, when the world pressed on his shoulders, was not more loaded than an awakened conscience pressed with its own iniquities. It is easy to talk of conviction of sin, but to feel it is quite another matter. It puts the soul under saws and under harrows of iron and makes it pass through the brick kiln. Sin on the conscience is a ghost which will haunt you by night as well as by day—and drive sleep away from your eyes till your soul chooses strangling rather than life. I say not that conviction is equally terrible in all cases, but some have felt this yoke to be exceedingly heavy and I believe that all God's people, when the Lord begins to deal with them to a greater or lesser degree, are bowed down beneath the oppressive bondage. Happy is the hour when the Lord breaks that yoke. He alone can remove it, but He does it most effectually—and then we know that He is Jehovah our God that brought us out of the house of bondage. To emancipate a soul from the thrall of sin is a labor worthy of God—and to His liberating hand be glory forever and ever.

Then the awakened soul begins to be conscious of a second yoke. More or less, according to temperament and circumstances and so on, but still in each case we somewhat feel the yoke of *natural corruption* and inbred sin. The moment we become Christians, an inward battle begins. The old self will not tolerate the intruder—the new creature in Christ Jesus—and a conflict ensues. The converted man will be clean rid of some sins and scarcely ever feel a temptation to them. Notably, some men who have been given to certain evil habits have never been tempted that way again, but the flesh has taken a turn and rebelled in another direction. I have known a man, after conversion, tempted to commit a totally new sin for him and the suggestion has been a galling yoke. A passion which before he did not know to be in his soul has been awakened and he has seen the meshes of a net gradually encompassing him—then has he cried out because of the oppression put upon his sin-hating heart. If a believer has gone very deep in sin before conversion, he will often have a hard battle of it arising from the recollection of old transgressions, old habits, and old lusts. You may get the serpent out, but the slime of the reptile still remains—it

needs the sanctifying power of the Spirit of God to purge its former lurking places. If a lion has long had his lair in a thicket, the hunters may chase him out, but his den is there and likely enough, cubs will come forth when least expected. And so it is with evil in the heart of man. An old cask smells of the wine it held. It will need a great deal of scalding to sweeten it and even then, if you put pure water into it, there will soon be a taste of the old liquor about it. In certain of our petty wars, we never seem to come to an end—the natives are neither at peace nor will they keep quiet—they watch for an opportunity and break out again. It is so with the war in the Christian's soul. You may presume that sin is completely dead in you, but it laughs while you are boasting and before long it will make you weep to think that you were so readily deceived. I have known a Christian man to have a temptation come upon him and though he has not yielded to it in any degree, it has clouded his joy and put a yoke on his neck. The temptation comes. He hates it, but it comes. He goes to God and prays against it, but it comes. He watches every step he takes, but there it comes. It seems to pursue him like his shadow. He would go to the ends of the earth to get rid of it, but there it is—it dogs his footsteps. He kneels down to pray and there it is. It is like the old story of the Scotch people who thought they had ghosts in their house so moved away to be rid of them—but as they moved, they heard a noise in the butter churn—the mischievous spirits were going with them. So have we known a Christian man move and shift and try to get away from a temptation—but there it has been—the torment of his life, a sword in his bones piercing him to the heart with daily anguish. To some men of God, temptation to a certain sin has been a galling yoke for years without end. They have cried to God, with their hair almost on end for horror of the sin and yet the suggestion to the evil has thrust itself upon them, as if it would not be refused. Read in Bunyan's, "Grace Abounding," how he was haunted with that thought of selling Christ and how the words seemed to ring in his ears—"Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him! Sell Him!" till at last he inadvertently said or thought he said, "Let Him go if He will." And then the devil gloried over him and said, "You have sold Christ." For the ten thousandth time Satan was a liar in his accusations. Honest John had done nothing of the sort, but he had been so plagued and perplexed with the temptation that he scarcely knew what he said or thought. Madame Bubble, too, is difficult to shake off when she courts a poor pilgrim. Her seductions are only to be resisted on our knees and even then they give us terrible twists. You do not all understand this and I do not wish you should. But if you are now experiencing what I describe, I would have you remember that the Lord can break this yoke also and tear away each one of its bands. Very joyful is the deliverance and when it comes the text is abundantly fulfilled—"They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke."

Another yoke which the Lord's people have too often borne is that of *a perpetual tendency to unbelief*. Unbelief lies in us all. It is *the sin of mankind*—the root sin—the taproot of all sorts of iniquity. Blessed are those who believe and are strong in faith. The Lord be praised whenever He brings us to full assurance. But there are certain of God's people who are so very prone to unbelief that on the very slightest turn of circumstances they begin to fret. At little troubles they grow nervous and as to their own spiritual state, they appear to themselves to be in jeopardy every hour. Often the only proof of their spiritual life which they can themselves perceive is their wish to be right, their desire to avoid sin, and their longing after God. They cannot say that they have much joy or much peace through believing, neither can they expect it, for their faith is so exceedingly weak. Others call them "killjoys," because they mope and mourn so much and in truth they reflect but small credit upon their religion. They act more as scarecrows to keep others away than as attractions to draw them in. Some of the Lord's people seem to be born in the shade and to live in the shade, as if they were descended from the old troglodytes or cave dwellers and love to be buried before they are dead. This habit of mind is to be condemned, nor should any who fall into it think lightly of it. But dear friends, we must not be severe upon others or condemn them. We must, on the contrary, feel that they are putting a very heavy yoke upon themselves and that the burden weighs down their spirits and crushes the joy out of them. There are many about whose interest in Christ nobody who knows them can have any doubt at all, whose Christian consistency is beyond all question, whose prayerfulness, whose love of the Word of God, whose simple, child-like trust in Jesus Christ is manifested to everybody except themselves. They are, nevertheless, in heaviness through anxiety as to their state. Their faces shine to others, but they share not in the brightness. No one has a

doubt about them, but they are full of doubts for themselves. May the Lord bring up such brethren out of their prison and then shall they know that He is the Lord when He has broken the bands of their yoke.

Some Christians are also loaded with a yoke *through great trouble*. We come together and we look cheerful and happy, but we do not know the burden of the person sitting in the pew with us. In such an assembly as this on Thursday nights, I know there is many a merchant who has come from the City where he has been driven to his wits' end all day long and he scarcely knows what he shall do. So he has said, "Well, I will just run into the house of God and I will hear what the Lord may have to say to my soul." Many and many a time a sweet promise has come home to the bewildered child of God and he has gone away feeling that the Master had sent a message to Him through His servant. I have known the housewife come up to the house of God in the same state—one child is sick and another sickening. The husband, perhaps, walking in a way that grieves the tender Christian heart of the wife and home affairs are anything but as they should be. But while she has sat before the Lord, there has come a word from the oracle of comfort and Hannah has been no sadder. Some of our brethren have a perpetual cross to carry. If we knew what they have to suffer in business, suffer in body, suffer in the domestic circle—if we knew the weight they have to carry—we should very often communicate to them words of comfort, whereas now through our not knowing, they are left unheeded and there is little or no Christian sympathy manifested. Ah, dear brother, it may be that you have been made to carry a very heavy yoke for years, but when the Lord shall break the bands of your yoke, then shall you know that He is the Lord. I can bear witness that trial has been a great blessing to me. I do not know that I have learned much except in trouble. What little I know has been whipped into me and I suspect it is so with most of my Master's family. By scourging He instructs every son that He receives. But when you have been in sore perplexity and difficulty and did not see your way out of it and could not, in fact, get out of it yourself—then have you known that the Lord was God when He has Himself appeared before you and broken the bands of your yoke. With a song you have magnified His surprising grace and blessed His delivering love.

I have not time, however, to mention all the various yokes, but I would say, next, that *many yokes which God's people bear they cannot break themselves*. When the sinner bears the yoke of sin he cannot get it off. He may tug and tug, but he only galls himself and fixes the yoke tighter than ever. The riveted fetter of sin is not to be shaken off. Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? If so, then he who is accustomed to do evil may learn to do well by himself, apart from divine grace. The yoke of despondency of mind and very frequently, the yoke of temporal trouble will be such that a man cannot free himself from them. "Stand still and see the salvation of God," is sometimes the very best advice you can give to a man in distress. He is like a drowning man—the more he struggles, the quicker he goes down. He cannot help himself. The Lord often puts His people, on purpose, into positions where there is an end of the creature, where all carnal hope fails, where you look all around and not a single ray of light gladdens your weary eyes till the star of Bethlehem breaks forth and heralds the morning.

But dear friends, let us remember that though yokes are very many and some of them are such that we cannot possibly break them off, yet *there is no yoke but what the Lord can readily enough take from His people*. To remove the yoke of sin He brings the pardoning blood of Jesus near and our heavy load departs. As for the power of sin over us, we overcome it through the blood of the Lamb. As for our daily cares, we cast our cares on Him who cares for us. As for our despondencies of spirit, our soul has heard Him say, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." Nothing is impossible with God and therefore, dear friends, though the peculiar form of your distress at this time is known to none but your heavenly Father and yourself, I am quite safe in saying that God can remove it in an instant if He pleases. He lifts the beggar from the dunghill and sits him among princes. He brings forth those that are bound with chains. Though you have lain among the pots, yet shall you be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold. One of His saints of old recorded his experience in these words, "Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O God, and You heard me." His experience is that of all the captives who trust in the Lord. No condition is so dark that He cannot at once enlighten it and no case is so hopeless that He cannot instantly relieve it. Do you believe that? Are you sure of it? Why, the very belief of that fact ought to minister comfort to your mind.

One other reflection comes to me and it is this. *We may expect the Lord to break the bands of our yoke.* If He can do it and we are His people, we may expect Him to do it. Our children look for a great deal from their fathers and I think you will find that friends and relatives frequently expect much more of you than they are likely to get—but none ever expected more of God than God has been pleased to bestow. “My soul, wait only upon God, for my expectation is from Him.” You know, if your child were sick and you could heal him, he would not be rash in expecting you to do it. And if your child were carrying an intolerable load and you, as his father, could release him from it, it would be only a natural expectation that he should reckon that you would do so. Oh you, then, that are oppressed—expect to be set free. Captives under the bondage of sin, since you *feel* sin to be a slavery, you are the Lord’s prisoners of hope. Oh, you that have the deepest sense of guilt and have written the blackest things against yourselves, expect the Lord to set you free. If He had meant to destroy you, He would have left you to bear your sin in utter indifference and would not have convinced you of it. What can be the good of His giving you two hells—one here and another hereafter? No, He is judging you now. He is bringing you to pronounce sentence against yourself that you may plead guilty and that He may absolve you through His abounding grace. Christian, He is bringing you low; He is stripping you; He is casting you into the mire; He is beating you small as the dust of the streets and all because by this means He will make you see your nothingness and will cause you more fully to appreciate the splendor of His grace and the all-sufficiency of His power. Knowing this, faith may help us to rejoice in tribulation the moment it arrives, saying, “Here is my Father’s black horse come to my door to bring me a new token of love from Him.” “We glory in tribulation also knowing that tribulation works patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” O ground, welcome the spade that is to turn you into a garden. O soul, welcome the affliction that is, through infinite mercy, to make you bring forth fruit unto your God. Then shall you know that the Lord is God when He has broken the bands of your yoke—and this you may expect Him to do. Thus much upon the first head, namely, that the Lord does break the bands of His people.

II. Now, secondly, WHEN HE DOES THIS, THEN THEY KNOW HIM TO BE THE LORD. Here we come to personal *experience*.

Beloved, when we have great deliverances from bondage, then we begin to see the divine attributes displayed. You all believe God to be very powerful, for you have heard His voice in the thunder and seen His might in the tempest. But when you have been brought into very deep distress and God has brought you out of it with a high hand and an outstretched arm, then you have said, “Now I see His power. No hand but His could have moved that burden and He has done it.” I do not suppose that all of you can go with me in this, but you who have done business in great waters have seen the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. You have known times when if anybody had told you that you would be delivered you would have said, “Impossible! Impossible!” Yet you have been delivered and you have cried out, “This is the finger of God. Now I know that there is a God in Israel, for He has done for me what no man could have accomplished, no, nor the angels of God.” You have felt the power of God come so near to you that you have said, like Jacob, “How dreadful is this place!” Awe has overwhelmed you at the thought that God should display such power towards such an unworthy one as you, to lift you up from such depths of trouble.

You must also have seen with wonderful vividness the attribute of *wisdom*. You have been all in a snarl. You have done your best and you have made things worse. You have gone for advice and the advice has perplexed you. You have looked in all directions and the more you have looked, the less hope you have seen. And then, all of a sudden, God’s finger has seemed to be put out and all the knots have been untied and His word has been fulfilled—“I will make the crooked places straight and the rough places plain.” You have had clear sailing where rocks appeared to hem you in—and when you have safely passed both Scylla and Charybdis, you have magnified the divine Pilot and been astounded at His infallible wisdom. Then have you called Him, “the only wise God,” and felt that He has abounded towards you in all wisdom and prudence. The path of your feet, as you have looked back upon it, has shone with mercy and you have said, “What a blessed road is this by which I have been led! I thank God that I came this way! It is the best path that ever I have trodden—the most soul-enriching track-way. What wisdom has been shown towards me! I have had a considerable trouble, but it has saved me from

one a thousand times worse. I have been a great loser but, still I am a greater gainer than a loser. I would not have missed this trial though I dreaded it! I would not have missed it for a thousand worlds! No one could have told me how this was to be done, nor by what process I was to be released, but now I know that the Lord is exceedingly wise and wonderful in counsel—blessed be His name.” If any caviler had answered you, “I do not believe in providence—it is all stuff and nonsense!” I do not suppose that you would have had much more patience with such a person than I should have and that is wonderfully little, for I am of the mind of a good old man to whom I was speaking yesterday, who said, “Mainly I read my Bible and having read it about 50 years and having tried it and lived by faith upon God—the modern humbug of the free-thinkers does not bother me. I know better. I never argue about it. I have lived upon the old doctrines and know the truth of them.” You will see, as I quote his words, that he put it rather strongly. But I am altogether of the old man’s mind. Gentlemen waste their words when they try to make me doubt the overruling presence and personal interference of the Lord in the affairs of His people. They might as well tell me that I have no father or that I never had a mother and that my parents never treated me kindly. I know what I know and I know this—the Lord is kind in all His ways and that His providence does continually interpose on behalf of His praying people. If the learned doubters cannot see a providence—well, perhaps no special providence has been sought for by them or vouchsafed to them. If they have no God and no providence, of course they cannot bear witness to what they do not know. Let them go home and pray God to teach them. But we know that God does appear for us and are not to be beaten out of it. And we expect to accumulate much more personal evidence upon that subject between this and heaven, for we shall again suffer times of dark distress in which God will appeal for us and we shall know that He is the Lord by His breaking the bands off our neck.

The Lord’s *love* is also clearly revealed in our deliverances. Have you not sat down with tears of gladness in your eyes and said to yourself, “What a God He is! Oh, what a God He is!” Have you not almost wanted to get up into a high pulpit, with the entire world around you, that you might bear witness to His grace to you on each particular occasion? My feet were almost gone, my steps had well-near slipped. I was in a great strait. I was hemmed in. I knew not what to do and I had grieved Him by my sin and wandered from Him. But though I had forgotten Him, He did not forget me. Though I was unbelieving, He was faithful. Though I was foolish, He was wise and He set my feet into a large room—therefore is my mouth opened and my heart constrains me to speak well of His name before many witnesses. I know that there are some of you who never will be able to tell what love God has manifested to you. The poet, though he strained the sense, yet spoke the truth when he said—

***“But O eternity’s too short
To utter half Your praise.”***

We shall never get through it, brothers and sisters. There is no fear of our stopping the eternal music for lack of matter, for the goodness, the grace and the love of God to us are past finding out and are altogether infinite. When we have had the bands of our yoke suddenly broken, then the divine love in its boundless length and breadth has been conspicuously before us and we have known the Lord.

Thus I might speak of each of the divine attributes, but I choose rather to pass to another topic. It is this. When the bands of our yoke have been broken, *it is often in answer to prayer* and because that liberty has come in answer to prayer, we have exclaimed, “Now I know the Lord.” If you have gone to God 20 times about a thing—(no, 20 times would be nothing), if you have risen in the night watches and cried with groans and tears about your burden, if you have walked your garden or walked the streets and all the while your soul has been crying, “My Father, deliver me!” pleading every argument your soul knew with God that He would come to your rescue—then, when the rescue has come—you have known the Lord. An answered prayer is a window into God’s existence, a proof of His faithfulness, an evidence of His presence. There you see that He is and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

So again, we know Him from another reason—*the special hand of God is often seen* in the breaking of the yoke of His people—the special hand. Those who look at providences carefully will often wonder at the specialties of God about little things; for instance, about the time—the exact time. God never is before His time and He is never late. He times His mercies to the tick of the clock. If they had come a little before, they might have been misused. If they came a little later, our spirit might have been broken

and the steed might have been starved while the grass was growing. There it is—the moment the hand of the devil lifted the dart, the hand of the eternal lifted the shield so that the dart was turned aside. Wonderful are the punctualities of God. You have noticed them. I am sure you must have done so. You have met a friend by accidentally going down one street when you generally went another—and that very friend has been the one that you most needed to see. I have known what it is to go out of my way and to complain of myself for having made such a blunder and thus wasting half-an-hour—till I have seen the person that I wanted to meet above all men, but had not thought of him as the right person to inquire of—and he has told me exactly what I wanted to know. I was going the right way when I was going out of the way. But often it is so, and so you shall find it and you shall have to lift up your hands and say, “Now also do I know the Lord—time, place, circumstances, words, little petty details, small things—He has had a hand in them all.” “Blessed be God,” I said to a dear one today, “for our great God, that He loves us in great troubles.” “And,” she replied, “blessed be His name that nothing is too little for Him.” So do I say tonight. Blessed be His name for breaking the little bands of our yoke and for removing the great yokes by such small but effectual means. We most admire those little touches which are so omnipotent. The magicians of Egypt turned water into blood, or pretended to do it, and they brought forth frogs—but when once Aaron began to make the dust into tiny life, they could not counterfeit the wonder and they said, “This is the finger of God.” Frequently by minute marvels God reveals Himself most clearly to the secret souls of His people and they hear in His still small voice more of His mind than in His thunder and mighty wind.

Dear friends, if you have passed through any great and special deliverances, you will join with me in feeling that the presence of God is often vividly perceived. I fear that the presence of God is not often felt as it ought to be at a dinner table when a number of people are met together and are enjoying themselves. But I remember my feeling the presence of God at a dinner table on a memorable occasion. There was a very large sum of money to be paid for the building of the Orphanage and I was up with certain friends at Regent's Park—dining at the house of one of our brothers. I there mentioned that I was short of some 2,000 pounds to meet an account which would very soon be due, but that I was sure that God would graciously give it, for it was His work and He would supply its needs in answer to prayer. We were discussing as to whether it was not rather bold to speak too positively about answers to a prayer of such a kind and while we were still discoursing, there came a telegram from the Tabernacle to me, saying, “A person unknown has called and left 2,000 pounds in bank notes for the Orphanage.” I read the telegram to the friends assembled and their gratitude and astonishment abounded. My dear old friend, Dr. Brock, who is now with God, said, “Put down your knives and forks and let us bless the name of the Lord.” And he stood up and poured out His heart in a most wonderful manner in devout thankfulness to the Answerer of prayer. We all heartily joined in that act of devotion. The Lord was there—we felt His presence as much as if it had been a sacramental supper, for the Lord had drawn so near to us. If someone had said to us just then, “Well, you know, this is a coincidence, a mere coincidence,” we should have laughed and I, for one, would have said, “It is a very blessed coincidence and I hope it will go on coinciding, for truly it coincides with the promise and with my faith in God.” The devil does not give his followers such coincidences. Let me say that I have prayed and God has heard me and if that is only a coincidence, it has happened so many hundreds and thousands of times to me, and I suppose to you also, beloved, that we are not to be cheated out of a demonstrated fact by the unbeliever's impudent theories.

We can boldly say, “Now I know the Lord, for He has broken the bands of my yoke in answer to prayer and I have felt Him near.” Yes, and we feel Him so near that often we are obliged to utter words of praise. See what the Israelites did when they had been in Egypt making bricks without straw and seeing their male children destroyed by a merciless tyrant. It was a happy, happy time for them when at midnight they came out of Egypt. Do you wonder, after they had crossed the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his chariots had all been drowned in the midst of it, that when they saw their enemies dead upon the shore, Miriam took her timbrel and all the daughters of Israel went forth with music chanting, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously. The horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea”? “Be quiet, good women. The philosophers have discovered that God is the ‘totality of existence,’ and that He

has no personality and consequently never interferes with the fixed laws of matter. You must not believe that He drowned those Egyptians by His own act and deed. It was an extraordinary natural phenomenon which occasionally happens just about that time and place. You ought rather to wonder at the marvelous laws of gravitation by which these Egyptians have sunk under the water.” Thus some superfluously wise fool might have prated to the women of Israel. But what would they have thought of him? What would Miriam have said to that? Modern philosophers explain all miracles away and Colenso with a slate figures the whole story of the Exodus into thin air. What would Moses have said to him for a bishop? In the presence of that miracle, with their shoulders still red with the lash, their faces still grimed with the brick dust, conscious that they had been in bondage and knew it—and were now free and that none but the eternal Jehovah could have set them free—the sons of Jacob would have pitched the philosophers into the Red Sea along with the Egyptians. I almost wish they were there, for they are of no use among us nowadays. Infinite mercy lets the creatures live, but we shall not cease from our glorying in our God because of what they call their criticism. In our case is fulfilled the promise, “They shall know that I am the Lord when I break the bands of their yoke.”

Beloved, if you do not know the Lord personally, do not talk about Him, nor pretend to know Him. But if you do *know* Him, be not afraid of being called dogmatic because you speak confidently. Read the Epistles of John and see how the beloved disciple harps upon that word. He says, “We know,” “We know,” “We know,” “We know.” The word occurs perhaps 40 times in that short Epistle. Know what you do know, and when you know it, do not be driven from it, but let the text be fulfilled in your experience, “*They shall know that I am the Lord when I have broken the bands of their yoke.*” If your sins have been forgiven, if you have been brought up out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay, if you have been delivered from the power of sin, so as “to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord,” or aim at it, and if you have been blessed in providence with answers to prayer and many a time rescued as from between the lion’s jaws, then say, “The Lord lives and blessed be my rock and I will walk by faith in Him. As for others, let them say what they will and doubt what they please—my soul follows hard after the Lord, for His right hand upholds me.”

There I leave the subject, praying that every one of you may have the bands of your yoke broken, for then shall you know the Lord and not till then. The Lord bless you evermore. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—EZEKIEL 34

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 126, 660.

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